

## Macalester College Variable Credit Policy

Effective Fall 1993, Macalester College established a variable credit system to replace its course unit system. To support this change, Macalester specified the following principles:

### Standard Course Definition

The College defines a standard course as a “traditional” classroom-based course with a total scheduled meeting time between 39 to 42 hours per semester (or 2,340 to 2,520 minutes per semester, respectively). This standard course shall be worth 4 semester credits. This credit value will be assigned to all standard courses unless there is an explicit department request otherwise.

### Nonstandard Course Definition

While a standard course at Macalester shall be worth 4 semester credits, courses may range in value from 1 to 8 semester credits.

The guidelines below for nonstandard courses are approximate. Courses meeting for more than the below times can be offered for less credit than the guidelines specify, perhaps because of course format or the desires of the department. (For example, a course meeting for a total of 22 hours/semester may be offered for 1 credit rather than 2 at the discretion of the department involved.) The maximum number of semester credits that can be awarded for the completion of any individual course at Macalester shall be 8 credits.

- Reduced Credit Courses: Courses that meet for less than 39 hours/semester can be awarded from 1 to 3 semester credits. The general guidelines for such “reduced credit” courses shall be as follows: ○ A course meeting approximately 10.5 hours/semester can receive 1 semester credit. ○ A course meeting approximately 21 hours/semester can receive 2 semester credits. ○ A course meeting approximately 31.5 hours/semester can receive 3 semester credits.
- Extra Credit Courses: Courses that meet for more than 42 hours/semester can be awarded from 5 to 8 semester credits. The general guidelines for such “extra credit” courses shall be as follows: ○ A course meeting approximately 52.5 hours/semester can receive 5 semester credit. ○ A course meeting approximately 63 hours/semester can receive 6 semester credits. ○ A course meeting approximately 73.5 hours/semester can receive 7 semester credits. ○ A course meeting approximately 84 hours/semester can receive 8 semester credits.

### Nonstandard Class Formats

The guidelines above are intended for determining the credit value of “traditional” classroombased courses. The College recognizes that variations on these guidelines will be necessary for classes that meet in “nonstandard” formats – for example, science laboratory

courses, studio courses, fine arts lessons, theatre rehearsals, field studies, internships, and student teaching.

### **Requested Policy Variances**

Department chairs may submit written requests for variances from the above guidelines to the Educational Policy and Governance Committee (EPAG), and the committee shall be authorized to evaluate and act on these requests. EPAG shall base its decisions on course credit values primarily, but not solely, on total schedule class meeting time and course format. In no case should EPAG allocate credits on the basis of such subjective criteria as, for example, the perceived difficulty of course material, relative difficulty of papers vs. computer programs vs. problem sets, type and number of projects completed, amount of pages read, etc. While important, these measures cannot be effectively quantified and would only lead to unacceptably subjective comparisons between departments and individual faculty members.